



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

March 12, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Natasha Baker *NBaker*
Deputy Superintendent of Education Services and
State School Reform Officer

SUBJECT: Expansion of Grade K-5 Seat Time Waiver Program

Section 101(9) of the State School Aid Act (MCL 388.1701[9]), permits the State Superintendent to waive the minimum number of hours and days of pupil instruction for Alternative Education programs or other innovative programs approved by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE).

In addition to considering applications for Grade 6-12 Seat Time Waivers (STW), applications will also be considered for Grades K-5 for school year 2015-2016. K-5 STWs have been available since 2012-2013 to a limited number of districts as part of a pilot program. The pilot program is being expanded to serve a total of 5,000 students statewide. A separate memo will be released outlining the process for applying for a Grade 6-12 STW.

In order to be considered for a K-5 STW in 2015-2016, a district or Public School Academy (PSA) must:

1. Access the application materials at www.techplan.org.
2. Complete the application and implementation/continuation plan.
3. Send the application and implementation/continuation plan to STWapp@michigan.gov by June 1, 2015.

Applications and implementation/continuation plans will be reviewed and approved using a rubric, also available for districts and PSAs to view at www.techplan.org. Districts currently approved for K-5 STW programs are pre-approved for the waiver in 2015-2016, but must also complete the implementation/continuation plan.

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The parameters of the 2015-2016 K-5 STW program include:

1. Each public school district, PSA, and intermediate school district (ISD) **must apply individually to the MDE for approval to run a STW program.** The STW application must be completed and submitted to the MDE along with any additional information requested by the Department. It should be noted that this is an optional program and carries additional requirements set forth in Section 5-O-B of the Pupil Accounting Manual. Failure to comply with Section 5-O-B, including non-participation in program research and evaluation, may result in the termination of a district's entire STW program. Each entity approved for a K-5 STW must also abide by all other applicable sections of the Pupil Accounting Manual.

While the application process will remain open year-round, districts seeking to operate STW programs during school year 2015-2016, must apply to the MDE no later than June 1, 2015, to ensure approval of applications in time for the Fall 2015 Full-Time Equivalency (FTE) count day.

2. Districts may apply to operate any and all of three types of programs:
 - a. An ISD-led STW Consortium program (each district must have local board approval as identified in the application).
 - b. Individual district-designed and operated STW program.
 - c. Blended Learning option described in #4.
3. Districts approved to operate a STW program may enroll a maximum of **25 percent of their enrolled student population, Grades K-5**, in instructional programs that use online learning to deliver up to 100 percent of the pupil's instruction. It is recognized that districts may choose to utilize other means and methods for facilitating instruction, such as experiential and project-based learning. In these cases, districts must explain the unique approach in the individual implementation plans accompanying the district application.
4. A district approved to operate a Blended Learning Option under its STW program may enroll **100 percent of its enrolled student population, Grades K-5, in blended instructional programs.** In this case, blended instruction is the practice of combining frequent face-to-face interaction with online learning to deliver the pupil's instruction. The Blended Learning Option will allow districts to use online learning to deliver **up to 50 percent of the pupil's instruction.**
5. An ISD-chartered PSA approved to operate a STW program may enroll **100 percent of its enrolled student population, Grades K-5, in blended instructional programs.** For the purposes of STWs, blended instruction is the practice of combining frequent face-to-face interaction with online learning to deliver the pupil's instruction. Enrollment in this type of waiver program is limited to **10 percent of the ISD region's combined Grades K-5 student population.**

* In the case where the ISD has chartered multiple PSAs, the combined enrollment of ISD-PSAs under this provision cannot exceed 10 percent of the ISD region's combined Grades K-5 student population. The ISD shall determine which ISD-PSAs can enroll students in the program and how many students they may enroll.

For additional questions, please contact the following MDE staff by email:

Brian Barber (Programmatic and Application Questions) barberb2@michigan.gov
Eric Lipinski (Application Questions) lipinskie@michigan.gov

We highly recommend that you allow your ISD Pupil Accounting auditor to review all programs to ensure that all Public Accounting Manual requirements will be met. Please call the Office of Education Improvement and Innovation if you have further questions at 517-241-6895.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance